

# STATE OF MICHIGAN

## HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Conservation, Forestry and Outdoor Recreation Committee

Community Input Statement-May 30, 2006

My name is Dr. Randolph G. Ston, I am from Commerce Township, Michigan, the head waters of the Huron River. This area of Southeast Michigan is within the watershed of the Huron, Shiawasee, Flint, Clinton and Rouge Rivers. I am here as a member of the township citizens group called SAVE OUR STATE LAND. We are working with the Township, the County of Oakland, you- this state legislature, the Governor's office, the state's media, and citizens from other Southeastern Michigan communities to save a critical passive natural open space in the township. It is the 600 acres of Huron River head waters managed by the DNR, the Proud Lake Recreation Area on Wise Road. This is the same head waters that connects us to Hamburg Township in Livingston County and then into Lake Erie and international waters. You can place a canoe in the water in front of my house at the start of the Huron, stay overnight on Huron public canoe camp grounds and make it to Lake Erie, like Chief Pontiac did. (What happens here at the Huron head waters affects the water level and quality in Hamburg Township, just ask their Township Supervisor Cindy Pine about the flood dangers from the Huron she faced in May of 2006).

Commerce Township's economic development, its growth, its land value was and is the result of people being attracted by these natural open spaces; these people now include the national and international employees of the firms now attracted to Michigan ( These are new economy people who want to live where there is open space recreation outside their home's door). This was pointed out in the marketing study found in the Commerce Township Parks and Recreation Master Plan that preceded the passage of the township's first open space mill age. This very open space that brought people to migrate here is decreasing. THE PEOPLE OF COMMERCE have asked the DNR and the Governor to save this DNR acreage from the downside of urban sprawl and allow people in this urbanizing area to have access to open space where they live, not where they must travel long distances to reach.

The DNR professional staff under Ms. Rebecca Humphries, Director Department of Natural Resources, in their blind uncritical pursuit of selling off 'small' parcels of DNR land are not using their environmental expertise to discriminate between the so called "JUNK Land" and the critical parcels such as Proud Lake, that play a role in sustaining local communities.. DNR staff has not including in their mission the impact of their actions on the local communities of the state.

The DNR staff has set an arbitrary minimum acreage standard as criteria to judge what to sell and what to save and protect and no other standard.

Just because this 600 acres falls below the number of acres the DNR has arbitrarily determined as worthy of being protected as an open space and water resource, does not in

anyway stand up as a standard that can be used to determine the value of this natural resource connected by the Huron River to the larger section of DNR Proud Lake Recreation acreage that is not to be sold. This whole natural resource is connected to our water resource supply consisting of more lakes, streams and rivers per square mile than any other area in Michigan.

After two years of building community awareness and support through the honest sharing of data on this property (collected, analyzed and reported by resource experts) and given to the DNR and the Governor; we at home find that none of this matters to the DNR. They are locked into following this arbitrary policy of selling tax payer land, vital to the local community to the highest bidder, even if it means the loss of this natural resource.

In the spirit of representative democracy, defended by those we have just honored this week, we are asking you to intervene in this DNR action and represent the wishes of your constituency back home by providing the DNR with the appropriate legal guidance. The standard of this guidance is the action before you. It should contain local citizen influence as well as the ability to sell or transfer land to local governments for no cost or recreational value; criteria for no cost or for recreational value land transfer must be established. And finally these land transfers must protect in perpetuity the natural nature of this open space.

We need local community influence on DNR staff decisions to sell land parcels. This influence would be based on sound developmental standards for the protection and development of our communities in Michigan. Let's start with these 600 acres of Proud Lake. The community of Commerce Township is setting aside their various political positions and joining together to support this action.